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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, RUSSIA, CLIMATE, WTO,  
DUBAI;BERLIN

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- [¶1.](#) Lead Stories Summary

Print media opened with reports on the ruling by the Constitutional

Court that banned shops from opening on Sundays. Sueddeutsche, however, dealt with the future U.S. strategy in Afghanistan under the headline: "Obama Wants to Force End to the War." Editorials focused

on President Obama's speech on Afghanistan and on the Constitutional

Court's ruling to ban shopping on Sundays. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau also opened with stories on the shopping hours.

- [¶2.](#) (Afghanistan) President Obama's Address

In a front-page editorial under the headline "Obama's decision," Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/02) wrote: "The price of failure would be

enormous, although some of it would only have to be paid at a later

date. Because Obama thinks this price would be too high, he will send tens of thousands of additional soldiers to Afghanistan. To fight the decisive battle over Afghanistan next year? The President has obviously not made this first major security policy decision of his

presidency easily. He sought advice and then basically followed the recommendations of his military commanders. Maybe he could have made a decision earlier, particularly because the situation in Afghanistan has not gotten better and sentiment in the U.S. finally turned to the worse, given the high death toll. Concerning the prospects of military engagement, American skepticism has almost reached the European level.... It is obvious that a strong physical presence is necessary... There is no guarantee that the President's strategy will work. At least, Americans have now heard from his mouth why they should not give up the matter after eight years. Neither should we, despite all the events that make us pessimistic. We should clarify what we think Afghanistan is worth to us. The announced increase of troops will have consequences, some of which will be bad. However, a hasty withdrawal and the status quo would have had disastrous consequences."

Berliner Zeitung (12/02) editorialized: "U.S. President Obama is begging for more soldiers for the Afghanistan mission - and his allies coolly abandon him. French President Sarkozy does not want to send

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soldiers at all, British Prime Minister Brown only a few, and Chancellor Merkel postpones the matter... The German government knows that it cannot stick to this position because it is clear that the adventure in Afghanistan will be successfully ended only if the military and civilian engagement is simultaneously increased."

Under the headline "Obama is hesitating in the fight," Spiegel Online (12/02) led with a story saying: "30,000 additional U.S. soldiers, withdrawal as of 2011 and the focus on Pakistan. Obama's speech on

Afghanistan at the military academy in West Point offered some details, but little vision. The U.S. President missed an opportunity to explain a war many Americans no longer understand."

Handelsblatt (12/02) reported under the headline: "Obama Makes the War His Own,": "By increasing U.S. forces...the President is now assuming full responsibility for the war in Afghanistan. In view of the immense state indebtedness of the United States, the costs of the war are increasingly the focus of fierce debate. But Obama cannot expect quick support from Europe. Yesterday, Berlin and Paris expressly rejected a quick decision."

Under the headline: "A Mandate to Fear," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/02) opined: "For months, the U.S. government has been brooding over the

question of how to break the trend in Afghanistan and on how to stabilize the country in order to leave it. President Obama has taken a lot of time for his Afghanistan presentation, with which the ISAF

Alliance will probably get its last chance. In the meantime, Germany is faced with an extension of the Afghanistan mandate but the government and the Bundestag are discussing the matter as if the strategic approach from Washington did not exist. Obama is calling

upon allies to send more forces. But Germany is again postponing the decision to the end of January. There are reasons for this: the government is still busy with itself and it wants to get the approval of the SPD. But one impression remains: patchwork is added to patchwork. Fear of the public is promoting hesitancy."

In an editorial, regional daily Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (12/02) said: "President Obama is now planning a similar tour de force as the one in Iraq: only after an increase in forces and an immense joint effort with domestic security forces in the anti-terror fight will a withdrawal come within reach. In November, the number of victims in terrorist attacks in Iraq declined to the lowest level since the U.S. invasion in March of 2003. In Afghanistan, there is no easy way out. In Afghanistan one thing is true that SPD leader Gabriel said yesterday with a view to the unpopular issue of an increase in forces: It is not the task of politics to give in to moods, but politicians must seek the best solution."

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In an editorial, Neue Osnabrcker Zeitung (12/02) observed: "President Obama will massively increase the U.S. armed forces contingent in Afghanistan. At the same time, the supreme commander of the U.S. armed forces is expecting more European forces in Afghanistan. This approach is expensive but it is the only correct one. The sad days of terrorism - 9/11 for the U.S., 3/11 for Spain, and 7/7 for the UK - have been burnt into the collective mind. In order to prevent such cowardly attacks and to help the Afghans live in peace, an intensified engagement must finally serve the training of police and armed forces and the reconstruction of this downtrodden country."

Foreign policy editor Christian Fröhlich wrote in an editorial in Thüringer Allgemeine Zeitung (12/02): "Obama is sending his last reserves to Afghanistan. With more than 120,000 troops in Iraq and a future deployment in excess of 100,000 at the Hindu Kush, even a superpower like the U.S. is pushing the limits of what is militarily feasible. The enormous personal burdens resulting from the eight-year offensive have brought home to Americans the dark side of what it means to be a soldier. To send more than an additional 35,000 troops was simply not possible without putting the concept of a voluntary army in question. By the same token, it would have been hardly an option to reintroduce the draft considering the growing domestic resistance to the Afghanistan mission. As a result, Barack Obama is putting all his remaining eggs in one basket. The Afghanistan conference at the end of January will show whether the international alliance will go along with this."

Regional daily Ostsee-Zeitung of Rostock (12/02) argued: "The allies in Germany, the UK, and France cannot help but increase their forces

in Afghanistan, too. It is true that Chancellor Merkel is still hesitating but she cannot allow the U.S. president to resolve the problem on his own. The course for the fight against the Taliban, al-Qaida, and criminals is set in Washington. Unease is spreading; this is understandable because previous troop increases have not increased security. For the time being, the call for an increase in civilian reconstruction efforts has gone unheard.... Obama's strategy is risky, success uncertain, and its failure would be fatal. The Nobel peace laureate has put his political fate into the hands of generals."

Regional daily Der Neue Tag of Weiden (12/02) had this to say: "Democrat Obama is now using the same means in Afghanistan with which

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Republican Bush succeeded in stabilizing the situation in Iraq to such an extent that U.S. forces could withdraw without losing face.... But the U.S. president does not have too much time left. The Americans are war-weary and in almost two years, the pre-election campaign will begin. And then one thing is all the more true: Afghanistan is Obama's war."

### 13. (Iran) Nuclear Conflict

Under the headline: "Tehran's Dream - Iran's Announcement that It Wants to Build Half a Million Uranium Centrifuges is a Defiant Reaction," Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/02) judged: "France has 59 nuclear power plants which generate three-quarters of the electricity that France needs. But it has only one enrichment plant for nuclear fuel. Iran does not have a single functioning nuclear power plant but wants to build ten enrichment plants. The construction of so many enrichment plants would turn Iran into an unprecedented nuclear state. But Tehran's announcement cannot be implemented; it is simply a defiant reaction to the sharp rebuke it received from the IAEA. And it was very painful because China and Russia backed it. If the decision were seriously meant, it would reveal a loss of reality reminiscent of the self-overestimation of the former Shah. But even if there is no material basis, this blustering is isolating Iran even more. Obviously, the ruling circles in Tehran are unable to agree on a common position. President Ahmadinejad is now taking the bull by the horns and talking about a dream empire with half a million centrifuges that are supposed to deliver sufficient uranium for the production of 20,000 Megawatts in electricity in the coming years. As a matter of fact, Tehran's goals remain unchanged despite all verbal invectives.

Iran's nuclear potential is to be developed to the threshold of weapons gradability by bypassing sanctions and, if necessary, even under restrictions."

### 14. (Russia) Medvedev's Security Initiative

Berliner Zeitung (12/02) analyzed: "Russian President Medvedev has a favorite foreign political project: a new security pact for the area

between Vancouver and Vladivostok. He was hardly in office when he proposed this pact during a visit to Berlin. Since then, stormy times have passed.... Even now it is clear that Russia and the West define the term 'attack' in different ways. The West thinks in terms of security against non-state threats or of security created by democratic institutions. Russia understands security rather as a conventional military threat. As a result, the draft treaty does not clarify anything. Germany, at least, cannot simply reject the

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proposal, since former Foreign Minister Steinmeier encouraged Medvedev, and we would like the president to enjoy a success. However, one cannot accept the treaty as it is. It is far too obvious that Russia does not want so much to create a new alliance as to weaken an old one, namely NATO.... It is remarkable that the draft allows every country to be neutral, but not to choose partners freely. This is unacceptable."

Under the headline "Medvedev's Project," Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/02) commented: "Medvedev first proposed his idea of a new European security setup in June 2008 in Berlin. It has taken a long time for

Russia to present a draft treaty. This has domestic reasons: the powerful man in Russia, Prime Minister Putin, did not like the project. There were even doubts whether the project, which was so badly received by the West, should be pursued any further.... The draft does not contain any surprises. It is obvious that it is aiming against NATO's enlargement. There is no talk of human rights. However, this was also the case with the Conference on Security and

Cooperation in Europe, the successor of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In tough diplomatic struggles, the Soviet Union made important concessions. Let's see whether history can be repeated."

#### 15. (Climate) Copenhagen Conference

Under the headline "China Is Playing Tricks with Respect to Carbon Dioxide [Emissions] Trading," Financial Times Deutschland (12/02) reported: "Shortly before the Copenhagen climate summit, China is under pressure as a profiteer of global emissions trading. According to FT Deutschland, the responsible UN agency rejected dozens of Chinese wind park projects. The background is the suspicion that the government in Beijing misuses emissions trading to attract foreign investments to the country. China is by far the greatest profiteer of the so-called Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). Beijing is now suspected of having intentionally scaled down state subsidies for domestic wind energy projects to qualify for CDM funds."

In an editorial, FT Deutschland (12/02) noted: "If the UN secretariat rejects projects such as the Chinese wind park, then this is a sign that the CDM works. But the question is whether it is sufficient to argue that China cut its national subsidy program. The UN secretariat cannot tell a government which industries it has to subsidize. Nevertheless, it is not in the sense of the inventors of CDM that governments use this mechanism to scale down their own efforts to protect the climate. That is why it is right that CDM is turning

into  
an issue in Copenhagen and beyond. It should be the goal of  
amendments to promote less strictly checked projects which make a  
genuine contribution to development and climate protection."

16. (Economic) WTO

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Handelsblatt carried a report on the WTO talks in Geneva under the  
headline: "America Pilloried at the WTO Talks," and reported: "At  
the  
WTO ministerial in Geneva, the United States has come under fire.  
The  
threshold and developing countries are accusing the United States of  
delaying a conclusion of the Doha Round. Egypt's Trade Minister  
Rachid Mohamed said: 'We are wasting our time. The United States is  
unwilling to move.' Outgoing EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton  
warned that the talks would not progress enough to conclude the Doha  
Round.... A successful conclusion could result in an additional  
push  
for the global economy worth up to 700 billion dollars. The poor  
countries in particular hope for such a conclusion, because they, in  
contrast to the large nations, cannot rely on economic stimulus  
programs. In return for a quick conclusion of the Doha Round, the  
Americans demand greater market access for industrial goods  
primarily  
in countries such as China, India, and Brazil. U.S. Trade  
Representative Ron Kirk said: 'We are willing to enter into the  
final  
round of talks but we expect other countries to open their markets  
more than they did before.' Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso  
Amorim,  
however, made the unclear U.S. position in trade policy responsible  
for the standstill. He said: 'The Americans do not say what exactly  
they want from us.' At the same time, he made clear that it is  
unacceptable to call upon the developing countries to make  
unilateral  
concessions."

17. (Economic) Dubai's Financial Problems, Implications

"Dubai's Ruler Must Realize that He Overestimated his Capabilities,"  
is the headline in Sueddeutsche Zeitung. The daily judged: "At the  
latest this Friday, the National Holiday in the UAE, everyone in  
Dubai  
should have realized that the golden times are over....but there is  
only  
one person who does not want to accept this; the absolutist ruler  
sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktum. The ruler does not seem to  
be  
impressed by the crisis of his country. Even if he does not want to  
accept this, he has overreached himself. This insight requires the  
capability of self-criticism. But the speech that he wants to  
deliver on the National Holiday reveals that he is unable to do so.  
Instead he wants to go on as before: to nationalize success and to  
privatize debts."

MURPHY